
Dr. TILLOTSON's
SERMON

Preached before the
KING and QUEEN
AT
HAMPTON-COURT.

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Specified before the

UNITED STATES SENATE

AT

WASHINGTON, D. C.

14th Sermon

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING and QUEEN

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Hampton-Court,

APRIL the 14th. 1689.

By JOHN TILLOTSON, D.D.

Dean of Canterbury.

Published by His Majesty's Special Command.

L O N D O N,

Printed for B. Aylmer, at the Three Pigeons against the
Royal Exchange in Cornhill; And W. Rogers, at the Sun over
against S. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street. MDCLXXXIX.

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HAMPTON-COURT,

April the 14th. 1689.

LUKE X. 41.

But one thing is needfull.

IN the accounts of Wise men, one of the first Rules and Measures of human actions is this, *To regard every thing more or less, according to the degree of its consequence and importance to our happiness.* That which is most necessary to that End ought in all

reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things onely so far as they are consistent with that great End, and subservient to it.

Our *B. Saviour* here tells us that *there is one thing needfull*, that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: And what *that* is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the Context, and the occasion of these Words, which was briefly this: Our *Saviour*, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertain'd at the house of two devout Sisters. The *elder*, who had the care and management of the Family and the affairs of it, was imployed in making entertainment for such a *Guest*: The *other* sat at our *Saviour's* feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preach'd.

The *elder* finding her self not able to do all the business alone, desires of our *Saviour* that he would command her Sister to come and help her. Upon this our *Saviour* gives her this gentle reprehension, *Martha, Martha, Thou*

art

are carefull and troubled about many things, but one thing is needfull. And what that is he declares in the next words, And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her; that is, she hath chosen to take care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our Saviour doth not altogether blame Martha for her respectfull care of Him, but commends her Sister for her greater care of her Soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to His Doctrine, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to His Person.

From the Words thus explain'd the Observation which I shall make is this.

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is the one thing necessary, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This Observation seems to be plainly contain'd in the Text. I shall handle it as briefly as I can; and then by way of Application shall endeavour to persuade You and my self to mind this one thing necessary.

And

And in speaking to this serious and weighty Argument I shall do these two things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does consist.

Secondly, to convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I shall shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the five following *Particulars*, in which I think the main business of Religion and the due care of our Souls does consist.

First, in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

Secondly, in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, in the constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion.

Fourthly, in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

Fifthly, in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary Principles and Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good Practice, wherein the life of Religion doth consist. And without this no man can be truly Religious. *Without faith, saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, it is impossible to please God: For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* Now these two expressions of *pleasing God* and *seeking Him*, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signify Religion, or the Worship and Service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and persuasion of these

Heb. 11. 6.

two fundamental Principles of all Religion, That there is a God, and, That He will reward those that serve Him : Because unless a man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as Religion.

And this knowledge of the necessary *Principles* of Religion our *B. Saviour* calls *eternal Life*, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says *He*, *to know thee, the onely true God; and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ*, that is, to be rightly instructed in the knowledge of *the onely true God*, and of *his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*: Under which *two general Heads* are comprehended all the necessary Principles both of the *Natural* and of the *Christian Religion*.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to Salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is requir'd ; but onely a teachable disposition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easie, and lye level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that *God who would have all men to be saved* hath
not

not provided for the Salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true God and the light of Christianity are shed abroad in the world, all that enjoy the Gospel are, or may be, sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their happiness: unless such care be used, as is in the Church of Rome, to *take away the key of knowledge*, and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an unknown Tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable consideration, onely it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of Mankind are mad and have need to be kept in the dark. But supposing men to be allowed those means of knowledge which God affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lye in mens Understandings, but in their Wills: Onely when men know these things, they must attend to them and consider them; that the light which is in their Understandings may warm their Hearts, and have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls consists in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errours and miscarriages of them: In a

more *particular* and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilfull sins, so far as we can call them to our remembrance ; and in a *general* repentance for sins of *Ignorance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exercise whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true Repentance doth not consist onely in an humble confession of our sins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them ; but chiefly in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, and in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the constant exercise hereof, we are put into a safe condition ; provided that we persevere in this holy resolution and course : But if we still retain the love and practice of any known sin, or if after we have taken up these good resolutions we return again to an evil course ; this is a clear evidence, either that our Repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are relaps'd into our former state : And then our Souls are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will continue in that dangerous state, till we have renew'd our Repentance and made it good in the following course of our lives.

III. The

III. The due care of our Souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, especially at proper times and upon more solemn occasions: By fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the Word of God with reverence and godly fear: By frequenting his publick Worship, and demeaning our selves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious Majesty of God, who observes our behaviour and sees into our hearts: And by receiving the B. Sacrament, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For these are not onely outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness. And whoever neglects these Duties of Religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath neither a due sense of God, nor care of himself: For in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earnest design the End, when he neglects the best and most proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The

IV. The due care of our Souls consists also in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the sword's point, and do endanger our Salvation as much as a deep wound in our Body would do our Life: And though such a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that commits any wilfull Sin knows the dismal consequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at last: For upon such a provocation God may leave the Sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart to proceed from evil to worse, and from one wickedness to another, till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the World is very pernicious to the Souls of men; because it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and designs; it tempts men to forsake God and Religion when their worldly interests come in
compe-

competition with them ; and betrays them to fraud, and falsehood, and all kind of injustice, and *many other hurtfull lusts which drown the Soul in perdition.*

But besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernable because it hath the face of Piety ; and that is *Faction* in Religion : By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Religion either doth not at all, or but very little consist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsistent with several of the most eminent *Christian* Graces and Vertues, as *humility, love, peace, meekness, and forbearance* towards those that differ from us ; it hath likewise *two* very great mischiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to Religion and the Souls of men.

First, that it takes such men off from minding the more necessary and essential parts of Religion. They are so zealous about small things, *the tithing of mint and anise and cummin*, that they neglect the weightier things of the Law, *Faith* and *Mercy*, and *Judgment*, and the *Love* of God : They spend so much of their time and heat about things doubtfull, that they

they have no leisure to mind the things that are necessary: And are so concern'd about little *Speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the Practice of Religion is almost wholly neglected by them: And they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Errour and Heresy in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. De-luded people! that do not consider that the greatest Heresy in the World is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion: And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding than one fault of his Will.

Secondly, another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great Piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very Religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the Out-works of Religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no
more

more to denominate them good Christians; but to be of such a Party and to be listed of such a Church, which they always take for granted to be the onely true one; and then zealously to hate and uncharitably to censure all the rest of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very sure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themselves good *Catholiques*; and all others *Heretiques*? And thus having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a mere Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any Church in the World, that had this phantastical Privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of Religion will be neglected: Besides, that a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature,

ture, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that Spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all Factions, but more especially in those of Religion.

V. The due care of our Souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good life; or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, in *exercising our selves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men.* For herein is Religion best seen, in the equal and uniform practice of every part of our Duty; Not onely in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men: Not onely in restraining our selves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our Lusts, and governing our Passions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, must not onely guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but must likewise be carefull to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal.

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He must not onely endeavour to secure his Head and Heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have dyed of it: In like manner, the care of our Souls consists in an universal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: Though we ought to have a more especial regard to those Duties which are more considerable and wherein Religion doth mainly consist; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chastity* in regard of our selves, *Charity* towards the poor, *Truth* and *Justice*, *Goodness* and *Kindness* towards all men: But then no other *Grace* and *Virtue*, though of an inferiour rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what Instances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an easy business and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and industry will serve for this purpose: To master and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Passions under

der the command and government of our Reason, and to attain to a good degree of every Christian Grace and Vertue; That Faith and Hope and Charity; Humility and Meekness and Patience, may all have their perfect work; and that, as St. James says, we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good Christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very short and easy business, and to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it: Which is so far from being the true Notion of Christian Faith, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very Definition of *Presumption*. For the Bible plainly teacheth us, that unless our Faith work by Charity, and purify our hearts and reform our lives; unless like Abraham's Faith it be perfected by works, it is but a dead Faith, and will in no wise avail to our Justification and Salvation. And our B. Saviour, the great Author and finisher of our Faith, hath nowhere, that I know of, said one word to this purpose, That Faith separated from obedi-

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ence and a good life will save any man: But
 He hath said very much to the contrary, and
 that very plainly. For He promisseth Blessed-
 ness to none, but those who live in the prac-
 tice of those Christian Graces and Vertues
 which are particularly mention'd by Him in
 the beginning of his excellent *Sermon* upon
 the Mount; of *Humility*, and *Repentance*, and *Meekness*,
 and *Righteousness*, and *Mercifulness*,
 and *Purity*, and *Peaceableness*, and *Patience*
 under persecution and sufferings for Righte-
 ousness sake. And afterwards in the same
Sermon, Not every one, saith He, that saith un-
 to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom
 of heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Fa-
 ther which is in heaven. And again, Whosoever
 heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I
 will liken him unto a wise man which built his
 house upon a Rock. And afterwards, He tells
 us, that whosoever builds his hopes of eternal
 happiness upon any other foundation, than
 the Faith of the Gospel and the Practice of
 its Precepts, doth build his house upon the Sand;
 which when it comes to be tryed by the Rain
 and the Winds, will fall; and the fall of it will
 be great. And elsewhere; If ye know these
 things, happy are ye if ye do them. And He
 does

Matth. 5. 3.
 4. &c.

Matth. 7. 21.

V. 24.

V. 26, 27.

Joh. 13. 17.

does very severely check the vain confidence and presumption of those, who will needs rely upon Him for Salvation without keeping his commandments; *Why call ye me,* says He, *Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Does any man think that he can be saved without loving God and Christ? *And this, saith St. John, is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:* and again, *He that saith I know him, and by the same reason, he that saith I love him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

If ye love me, saith our B. Lord, *keep my commandments:* And again, *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*

Does any man think, that any but the children of God shall be heirs of eternal Life? *Hear then what St. John saith, Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous:* And again, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the Bible, from the beginning of it to the end.

If

If thou dost well, saith God to Cain, shalt thou Gen. 3. 7.
 not be accepted? And again, Say ye to the righte- Isai. 3. 10, 11.
 teous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat
 the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it
 shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands
 shall be given him. And in the Gospel, when
 the young man came to our Saviour to be in-
 structed by Him what good thing he should do
 that he might inherit eternal life, our Lord
 gives him this short and plain advice, Matth. 19. 17. If thou
 wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. And
 in the very last Chapter of the Bible we find
 this solemn declaration, *Blessed are they that
 do his commandments, that they may have right
 to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates
 into the City, that is, into Heaven, which the
 Apostle to the Hebrews calls the City which hath
 foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*
 So vain and groundless is the imagination of
 those, who trust to be saved by an idle and
 ineffectual Faith, without holiness and obedi-
 ence of life.

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to con-
 vince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of
 minding Religion and our Souls. When we
 call any thing necessary, we mean that it is
 so

II.

so in order to some End, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessaries of Life, without which men cannot subsist and live in a tolerable condition in this World: And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happiness being our chief End, whatever is necessary to *that* is more necessary than any thing else; and in comparison of *that*, all other things not onely may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince men of the necessity of Religion, I shall briefly shew, That it is a certain way to happiness: That it is certain that there is no other way but this: And that if we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

First, That Religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have God's express Declaration and Promise, the best assurance that can be. He *that cannot lye* hath promised *eternal life*, to them who by *patient continuance in well-doing* seek for glory and honour and immortality. All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable, is promised to us upon the terms

terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present world*: A mighty reward for a little service; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days: A happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

Secondly, 'Tis certain also. that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, *That if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if by the spirit we mortifie the deeds of the flesh, we shall live*: That *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*: And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of *Covetousness, or Adultery, or Malice, or Revenge*, shall not enter into the kingdom of God: And we have reason to believe Him concerning the terms of this happiness, and the means of attaining it, by whose favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it.

And if God had not said it in his Word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only

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a condition of our happiness, but a necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purged from their Lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devilish Passions of *Malice*, and *Envy*, and *Revenge*, before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with *him who is love, and dwells in love.*

Thirdly, If we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extreamly and for ever miserable. The *Word of Truth* hath said it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if God should hold his hand, and should inflict no positive torment upon sinners, yet they could not spare themselves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked Life which they had led in this World, and the Stings of their own Consciences must necessarily make them miserable, when-ever their own Thoughts are let loose upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they shall have nothing either of pleasure or business to divert them.

So

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those Miseries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be necessary for us to mind Religion ; without which we can neither attain that Happiness, nor escape those Miseries.

All that now remains, is to perswade you and my self seriously to mind this *one thing* necessary. And to this end, I shall apply my Discourse to two sorts of Persons ; those who are remiss in a matter of so great concernment, and those who are grossly careless, and mind it not at all.

First, To those who are remiss in a matter of such vast concernment : Who mind the business of Religion in some degree, but not so heartily and vigorously as a matter of such infinite consequence doth require and deserve.

And here I fear the very best are greatly defective ; and so much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the necessity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man shall ever be admitted into the Mansions of the Blessed : They believe likewise, that according

cording to the degrees of every mans holiness and vertue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happiness in the other ; that *he that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sows plentifully shall reap plentifully* ; and that the measure of every man's reward shall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions ? And notwithstanding we are allur'd by the most glorious promises and hopes, and aw'd by the greatest fears, and urg'd by the most forcible argument in the world, the evident necessity of the thing ; Yet how faintly do we run the Race that is set before us ? How frequently and how easily are we stop'd or diverted in our Christian course by very little temptations ? How cold, and how careless, and how inconstant are we in the Exercises of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty ? Did we act reasonably, and as Men use to do in matters of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity does depend.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security,

ty, and resolve to make that the great business of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity: And when we are immersed in the cares and business of this Life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought often come into our minds, That there is *one thing needful*, and which therefore deserves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another sort of persons, who are grossly careless of this *one thing necessary*, and do not seem to mind it at all: Who go on securely in an evil course, as if either they had no Souls, or no concernment for them. I may say to these as the Master of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was fast asleep in the Storm, *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God.* When our Souls are every moment in danger of sinking, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every Oar, and to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so precious from a danger so threatening and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of this Argument of necessity in other cases, and very carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of this life, and how
to

to avoid those great temporal evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering: But ~~the~~ great necessity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eternity, to secure the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the endless and insupportable miseries of another World. *This, this*, is the *one thing necessary*; and to *this* we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the necessity of things, and wisely weigh the concerns of this Life and the other in a just and equal ballance, we should be ashamed to misplace our diligence and industry as we do; to bestow our best thoughts and time about these vain and perishing things, and to take no care about that *better part which cannot be taken from us*. Fond and vain men that we are! who are so solicitous how we shall pass a few days in this world, but matter not what shall become of us for ever.

But as careless as we are now about these things, time will come when we shall sadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God shall be pleas'd to grant

us then so much time and use of our Reason as to be able to recollect our selves, we shall then be convinc'd how great a necessity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being sensible of the value of them, till we are ready to despair of saving them.

But, blessed be God, this is not yet our case, though we know not how soon it may be. Let us then be wise, and consider these things in time, lest Death and Despair should overtake and oppress us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to consider that this is the best opportunity of your Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now most capable of the best impressions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin* : This is the acceptable time, *this is the day of salvation.*

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so ; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might : For it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing call it back.

It

no It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, that the best thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible World which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware: Let us but judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them: And let us live now, as after a few days we shall every one of us wish with all our Souls that we had liv'd; and be as serious, as if we were ready to step into the other World, and to enter upon that change which Death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange stupidity of Men! That a change so near, so great, so certain, should affect us so coldly, and be so little consider'd and provided for by us: That the things of Time should move us so much, and the things of Eternity so little. What will we do when this change comes; if we have made no preparation for it?

If

If we be Christians, and do verily believe the things which I am speaking of, and that after a few days more are pass'd Death will come, and draw aside that thick Veil of sense and security which now hides these things from us ; and shew us that fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth to think upon : I say, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for Death and a better Life, as may give him that constancy and firmness of Spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great Change without amazement ; and to have a mind almost equally poiz'd between that strong inclination of Nature which makes us desirous to live, and that wiser dictate of Reason and Religion which should make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these things, because our eyes are dazzel'd with the false light and splendour of earthly felicity : But *this* assuredly is more worth than all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of
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them, to be able to possess our Souls at such a time, and to be at perfect Peace with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed trusting in God* : To have our Accounts made up, and Estate of our immortal Souls as well settled and secur'd, as by the assistance of God's Grace humane care and endeavour, though mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first and great care, and prefer it to all other interests whatsoever. And to this end, we should resolutely disentangle our selves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have competent liberty and leisure to attend this great concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit posture and preparation for another World : That when Sickness and Death shall come, we may not act our last part indecently and confusedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we shall want both time and all other advantages to do it in : Whereby our Souls, when they will stand most in need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and in
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an anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become of them for ever.

To conclude, This care of Religion and our Souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparison of it we are to neglect the very necessities of Life. So our Lord teacheth us, *Take no thought saying, what shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed ? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The Calls of God and Religion are so very pressing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever : This our Saviour signifies to us by denying the *Disciple*, whom he had call'd to follow him, leave to go and bury his Father, *Let the dead*, says he, *bury their dead, but do thou follow me.* Matth. 6.
31, 33.

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the business of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever else we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end :* Which God grant we may

may all do, in this our day ; for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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